WHENCE, WHITHER, AND WHY.

"*What have I now done? Is there not a Cause?*"

I SAM., XVII: 29.

A SERMON,

PREACHED BY

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SERMON.

"What have I now done? Is there not a Cause?"

I Sam. xvii: 29.

THIS was the answer of David to his brother Eliab when he complained that he had left those few sheep in the wilderness and come down to see the battle. Viewed by itself, and not as a connecting link in a wondrous chain of Providence, the visit of David to the army of Israel was an unimportant affair, and perhaps would interest us little. Yet, insignificant as it might seem, in David's opinion it had a cause, and, if it needed justification, could be justified. If the lesser events of human life and national history have their causes, so also must the greater. The men who inaugurate a revolution must be able to say why, and the man who takes a solemn and important step in life—a step involving momentous issues for himself and others, which excites comment, sunders tender ties, requires suffering and sacrifice—should, first of all, be satisfied that his action can be justified at the bar of conscience, in the light of Divine truth, and in the sight of a heart-searching God. When your pastor stands among you this day to bring to a close an association of eight years, and to announce his intention of resigning his ministry in the Protestant Episcopal Church, you, who have been the peculiar objects of his love and care, and who have not failed in real kindness to reciprocate his attachment, have certainly the right to ask him, "What hast thou now done?" Receive his answer in the words of David, "Is there not a cause?"

There must be a cause, and there is a cause. Let it be prefaced that this cause is not to be found in the internal relations or conditions of the parish itself. The Vestry have been warm personal friends of the rector—have so repeatedly expressed themselves, and have been so esteemed. The congregation has been harmonious, united, and useful in a high degree. The pastor does not go forth compelled to seek another field by inadequacy of support; nor is he driven out by strifes, contentions, and discords among you; nor does he leave because you have hampered or restricted his work or denied him any rightful liberty; nor again does he withdraw because any number of you or anyone among you has desired his departure. You have been loving and beloved; you have been generous and devoted, and the severence of the tie which has so long united us is one of the sorest trials of your pastor's life. It is no indifference, want of sympathy, or attachment that prompts this action. His heart has again and again sunk within him when compelled to contemplate the dire necessity.

And if this exigency arises not from the internal relations and conditions of the parish itself—for which God be thanked—so neither does it originate in altered tastes, a fickle purpose, or the desire of change. Your pastor's faith has not changed an iota. He still holds to the same great fundamental articles of Christian faith; still cherishes a preference for a liturgical worship; still believes that, while Episcopacy is not and cannot be proved by Scripture to be essential to the being of a Christian Church—a moderate Episcopacy, nevertheless, contributes to its better being. He would fain cling to the Church of his fathers. He is loath to leave the fold into which he was initiated in his infancy, but there is a voice of internal conviction which cries, "Go forth," and there is a voice of Divine direction above which commands, "Come out and be separate," and these voices must be obeyed, cost what it will.

There must be a going forth on the part of all who hear these voices, and are loyal to truth and obedient to God. And for this separation there is a cause in the fact that there is a want of accordance between the teachings of Scripture and certain words and phrases in the standards of the Protestant Episcopal Church,

in her attitude toward other Protestant Churches, in her actual condition and general influence, and in the fact that there is no hope of securing, either now or hereafter, the changes desired through ordinary and legitimate channels within the Church.

What have I now done? Is there not a cause? Yes, there is a cause. *I find it first, in certain teachings of the Book of Common Prayer.* It was greatly desired in the reign of Queen Elizabeth to consolidate the kingdom by healing the mutual antipathies which had long subsisted between the Protestant and Roman Catholic portions of the population. In the accomplishment of this purpose, it was proposed to unite these two classes of her subjects in the common worship of the Church of England. In order to effect this, the more Protestant standards in use during the reign of Edward VI were superseded by a compilation (from which our present Prayer-Book is derived), which was in fact, as under the circumstances was to be expected, *a compromise between Romish error and Protestant truth.* The fruits of that ungodly compact, the Church of England and the Protestant Episcopal Church of the United States, have been reaping in the distractions and divisions of many years.

Two and three-quarter centuries have gone since the Maiden Queen was laid to her rest in the Chapel of Henry VII in Westminster Abbey, and yet we are suffering to-day from a sin of her administration. What an impressive illustration of the truth that it is never safe to make a compact between right and wrong; and of that no less solemn truth of which the poet reminds us when he says: "The evil that men do lives after them." The result of the compact referred to has been that the Book of Common Prayer *is in part Protestaat, and in part Romish.* The Articles of Religion are entirely Protestant. Other portions of the book are not so.

In evidence of the latter statement, we may cite the Baptismal offices and the use of the word priest. The erroneous teaching of the Baptismal offices cannot be better or more concisely stated than by the Rev. James A. Latané in his letter to Bishop Johns:—

"Regeneration is stated in the Word of God to be essential to salvation; the mode and means of regeneration are things that con-

cern the way of salvation; and to affirm that Baptism invariably effects regeneration, and that every person who has been baptized has, therefore, been regenerated, is dangerously to delude human souls, and that, too, in a particular essential to salvation. And yet this doctrine, contrary as it is to God's Word, is distinctly and constantly taught and believed in the Church, and finds countenance at least in that service where the minister, in the case of *every* child and *every* adult baptized by him, is required to say, after the act of baptism, *this* child, or *this* person, *is now regenerate.* And so long as the Baptismal service remains in the Prayer-book in its present form, that teaching will go on, as it has done so alarmingly of late, to increase and prevail more and more in the Church."

The justice of this criticism is vindicated by the answer prescribed to the second question in the Catechism, where our little ones are taught to say in reply to the interrogatory, Who gave you this name? "My sponsors in Baptism, *wherein I was made* a member of Christ, a child of God, and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven."

Again in the answer to the fourth question, referring to the same Rite, the child is instructed to say "I heartily thank our Heavenly Father that he hath called me to this state of salvation through Jesus Christ our Saviour, and I pray unto God to give me His grace that I may continue in the same unto my life's end."

The child's natural inference from this language would seem to be that in baptism he underwent a great spiritual change, and that simply because he has been baptized, he is now and therefore in a state of salvation, "which is a dangerous delusion of human souls."

The word priest means a mediator or medium of acceptable communication between God and man, and implies that he who holds such office is to present acceptable sacrifices to God for the people, and to impart to them by the power of his official acts the grace or blessing which God is ready to bestow, especially his absolution or forgiveness of sins. This word priest is not once used of the Christian ministry in the New Testament. "I undertake," says Dr. Jacob, late Head Master of Christ's Hospital, "to prove from the New Testament and from the teaching and practice of the Apostles there recorded, that according to Scripture truth the Christian ministry is not a priesthood,

and Christian ministers are not priests, are not invested with any sacerdotal functions to perform;" and the judicious Hooker—a high authority in the Church of England—long ago admitted that "in truth the word PRESBYTER doth seem more fit and in propriety of speech more agreeable than PRIEST, with the drift of the whole Gospel of Jesus Christ." Yet this word *priest* is repeatedly employed in the Book of Common Prayer to describe the ministry in this Church. A priest is naturally associated with an altar, and an altar as naturally implies a sacrifice. As the oak lies enwrapped in the acorn, so does a sacerdotal system lie enfolded in the one word *priest*. Now the New Testament recognizes no earthly priesthood, but the universal priesthood of believers. It teaches us that we have indeed a great High Priest, but it is no mortal man who fills the mighty office,—it is Jesus, the Son of God, who is passed into the heavens. And with the priesthood falls the altar—we have no altar but Mount Calvary—and with the altar falls the sacrifice; we have no sacrifice but that full, perfect and sufficient sacrifice, oblation and satisfaction for the sins of the whole world once for all offered on the cross! Yet the Prayer Book repeatedly applies the term *priest* to the officiating minister, and the people have become so habituated to its use and natural inferences, that vast numbers have been and are now being educated by it into the belief that the Christian ministry is a sacerdotal office; the Lord's table an altar, and the Lord's Supper a sacrifice.

Of course we shall be here reminded that the expressions faulted are susceptible of an evangelical interpretation, that hundreds who have used and do now use the baptismal offices, are far from believing in baptismal regeneration, and that the word priest is simply a contraction of the word presbyter. Grant it; but does this relieve the difficulty? As a matter of fact, there are multitudes who know nothing at all of this, and who take the words to mean just what in plain English they seem to import. And even if it were possible (which, in view of the many burdens already imposed upon the ministry is impossible), that whenever the baptismal service is performed or the word priest is used, the terms employed could be explained and defined, assigning to them an interpretation accordant with Scripture truth, we should

still be met and our effort frustrated by the objection that our opinion is but the opinion of a feeble minority, and that the great body of the Church believe very differently. And how then can we go on employing words and phrases which, whatever their possible import, observation and the knowledge of Divine truth alike assure us are unscriptural in their character, obscure the Gospel, dishonor the Saviour, and tend to mislead the precious souls whom it is our solemn responsibility and highest function to guide into the way of truth.

What have I now done? *Is there not a cause, secondly, in the exclusive and proscriptive attitude which this Church maintains toward the ministry and membership of other Churches?* But does this Church maintain such an attitude? Mr. Latané writes:—

"It is now held by an overwhelming majority in the Episcopal Church that there can be but one form of Church polity; that ordination by Bishops, deriving their authority by succession, in an unbroken line, from the Apostles, is *essential* to a valid ministry; and that without such ordination there can be no *true* Church, and no *lawful* administration of the sacraments."

The author of a pamphlet published in 1869 thus expresses himself: "The studied silence throughout our service book in reference to the Christian bodies around us—the very general language that is used as in some of our prayers when other than our own body is referred to; the changes that have been made in portions of our ritual, *e. g.* the substitution of the word priest for pastors in the prayer "hat it may please thee to illuminate all bishops, priests," &c.; the very positive language found in one of the prayers of the Institution office: "Oh Holy Jesus, who hast promised to be with the ministers of the *Apostolic succession* to the end of the world," &c. &c.; the position our Church takes in reference to reordination (a Romish priest seeking her ministry is admitted without reordination, but one coming from any of the Protestant bodies about us can only be received by the laying on of the Bishop's hands), in all this we have the ground upon which is built that exclusive Churchism which makes the existence of the Church of Christ dependent upon an unbroken Apostolic tactual succession." Prayer-Book vs. J. B. p. 16.

As a result of this theory—now held, as stated, by an overwhelming majority of Episcopalians—the ministry of other Protestant Churches is held to be invalid. Their pastors are not permitted to occupy the pulpits or officiate at the Communion tables of this Church; and those of her clergy who openly fellowship with them in the practical recognition of the validity of their ministry, are regarded with suspicion and distrust. Their loyalty is impugned, and they are considered in greater or less degree factious and disturbers of the peace.

Now, in reference to this attitude we take leave to remark, in the first place, that there is reason to believe that *it grieves the Spirit of God.* It is not to be doubted that the Divine Spirit has set the seal of His approval upon other than episcopally constituted churches, and that in a very eminent degree. Many of them have been highly distinguished for zeal, for love, for liberality, for success, in the Master's cause.

By their fruits ye shall know them! Their love to the Lord Jesus no man can question. The earnestness of their piety is beyond dispute, and wonderfully does GOD own their ministry in the building up of His kingdom by their hands, and in the changed hearts and lives of multitudes. Is it for any man to disapprove what GOD has thus approved? Is it for us to pronounce invalid that which the Holy Ghost has honored with the highest evidences of validity? Can we do this without sin? Can we do it without grieving the Spirit of GOD? Does not the voice that spake to Peter sound in our ears: "What God hath cleansed that call not thou common!"

My dear hearers, those who are good enough for Jesus, must be good enough for us; and we certainly are guilty when we maintain ourselves, or support a system which maintains, an attitude of reproof and exclusion toward those whom He has honored with the highest tokens of His favor and His love!

We remark, in the second place, that such an attitude must cast *a doubt upon the reality of our own possession of that priceless blessing which is thus denied to others.* St. John declares, "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren." But if we do not deal on terms of equality with those whom the Lord is not ashamed to own as his brethren,

and to bless equally with us as members of the household of Faith, sharers with us of its shelter and its privilege, what becomes of the evidence that we have passed from death unto life?

Then again, remember it is written, "If any man has not the Spirit of Christ he is none of His." What was the Spirit of Christ in this matter? Listen! "And John answered Him, saying, Master, we saw one casting out devils in Thy name and he followeth not us, and we forbad him because he followeth not us. But Jesus said, Forbid him not." Now, if a Church, by custom or by canon, excludes from her pulpits and her services him who is doing the Lord's work in another way, or another sphere than her's, practically withholding her recognition of his ministry; and while excluding him from her own boundaries, manifesting a disposition to shut him out of the whole field, does she display the spirit of John or the spirit of Christ; the spirit of the bigoted and intolerant disciple, or the spirit of the Gracious Master? and is it right for me, in the former case, to be a participator in her sin?

The burden thus imposed upon a law-abiding minister in this Church has become to your pastor intolerable. Thus to seem to disapprove what God approves, thus to grieve dear brethren of Christ in other Churches, thus to sin against the law of Christian love, has been a weight upon the spirit too heavy to be borne.

It may be said, maintain a manly protest. We reply: To remain obedient, though protesting, involves for many apparent complicity, since multitudes will mark our conformity who never hear our protest. It is a sore dilemma. We must either openly violate the law written and unwritten of this Church, and so assume the attitude of troublesome and factious disturbers of the peace, and that without hope of effecting a reform, or we must go forth from the Church into which we were born, in which we have spent half a lifetime, and which we fain would faithfully serve, to seek some refuge where peace and freedom may be found!

What have I now done? *Is there not a cause, thirdly, in this, that while ministers who hold what are commonly known as Evangelical views of divine truth, remain in this Church as at present*

governed, they are building up a system which by their precept, and to a certain extent in their practice, they condemn? *

The Scriptural character of their teaching, the simplicity of their worship, their avowed love to the Lord's brethren in all the churches, induce many persons who (for one reason or another, as change of residence, family connections, a preference for a liturgical service, &c., &c.) desire to make a change in their ecclesiastical relations, to unite themselves to them. After a time, perhaps after years of such ministration, these persons remove to the distant city or the neighboring village. They have now become attached to the forms and service of this Church, and will naturally seek out its nearest representative in the place of their new residence. In the process of this change they may be,—as things are with us they are most likely to be,—brought into contact with a High Church ministry and become subject to its influence. If their preference is strong for the service to which they have of late become accustomed, and they are persons of no great discrimination in the discernment of religious truth, they will remain beneath this influence, and the risks are not small that in course of time they will be found first apologizing for, then defending, and at last thoroughly identified with a system of sacerdotalism which a few years before they would have utterly repudiated and refused. And *the Evangelical minister in this Church who first attracted them to its fold, has been the initiator of the process*, the unhappy instrument, in the beginning, of transfer from that which he esteemed a place where these persons might be blessed, to that which he believes a place of danger to their souls!

This process is continually going on, and must occasion, one would think, many unhappy reflections in the breasts of those who while loving and preaching Evangelical truth, yet lend themselves to its accomplishment.

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* Since this sermon was prepared, a clergyman in the Protestant Episcopal Church has informed me that he has been instrumental in founding, or sustaining, *seven* churches upon an Evangelical basis: all of which have now become Sacramentarian in their tendency and teachings; and further, that a certain missionary society instituted for the promotion of Evangelical truth, has been disbanded by its supporters, because of sixteen churches established or aided by it, *fifteen* have fallen under the control of Sacerdotalism.

For one I am unwilling any longer to occupy this position, and candidly confess my preference that the Presbyterian should remain a Presbyterian, and the Methodist a Methodist, than that he should become a Sacerdotalist.

What have I now done? *Is there not a cause, in the divisions which rend this Church?* Can two walk together except they be agreed? How is it possible for two systems so opposed and distinctive as the Sacramentarian on the one hand, and the Evangelical on the other—systems which mutually denounce and exclude each other—to coalesce or dwell peacefully in the same house? Whichever of these systems is right, the other is radically and vitally wrong. They are mutually destructive! There can be, there never has been, any love lost between them. He who believes in salvation by the Church and the Sacraments, will never agree with him who preaches justification by faith, and salvation by JESUS CHRIST alone. You may as hopefully endeavor to mix oil and water as to unite these two. The adherents of these diverse systems are alike—conscientious, earnest, devoted, unyielding in their attachment to the principles they have espoused—neither of them means to give—neither of them can give up to the other. Compromise between them is impossible. Then why should they be bound together—hateful and hating one-another? Is not peaceful separation better than eternal strife? Let contending brethren learn a lesson from Abraham and Lot:—

"And Abraham said unto Lot: Let there be no strife I pray thee between me and thee, and between my herdmen and thy herdmen: for we be brethren."

"Is not the whole land before thee? Separate thyself I pray thee from me; if thou wilt take the left hand, then I will go to the right, or if thou depart to the right hand, then I will go to the left"

And if the Evangelical section of the Church be indeed, as represented by its opponents, "a miserable, helpless, hopeless minority," only tolerated and perhaps tolerated only for a time, while the defendants of Sacramentarianism are overwhelmingly in the ascendant, filling the offices and controlling the legislation of the

Church, is it not time for the minority to put an end to this strife, by gracefully and quietly withdrawing and seeking for themselves a home where they may dwell together as brethren in unity, and do the Lord's work at peace, among themselves? I have asked myself this question, and answered it in the affirmative!

What have I now done? *Is there not a cause in this, that reform within the Church is already an impossibility?* Yet you cry "Stay and fight it out within the Church"! We answer: The issue has been accepted. The battle has been fought, and the battle has been lost, and the hosts of Sacramentarianism are this day jubilant and triumphant, and in possession of the field, Look at our Evangelical Seminaries, one after another going down or losing their distinctive principles. Look at our House of Bishops: one standard bearer after another lost to us, one going over to the enemy, another falling on the field, and another disheartened, retiring from the contest. And who take their places? Leaders! Aye, leaders! but men who are no leaders to us. Look at our ministry—repleted whence? Why, from the nurseries of Sacerdotalism, and in whose ranks an Evangelical is fast becoming a *rara avis*—a veritable curiosity. Look at our Churches, with their altars and their sacrificing priests, aping the mummeries of Rome; and yet you cry, Stay and fight it out within the Church!

Think what this Church was forty, sixty years ago. See what she is to-day, and reflect that revolutions never go backward.

Remember how a few years ago nine bishops craved relief for the oppressed consciences of their brethren, and how their respectful asking was scouted by the highest Council of the Church, while the Bishop of this Diocese, with a wisdom which subsequent events have proved prophetic—predicted for the effort a *mortifying discomfiture:* "very nearly the whole Church standing amazed that any respectable body of Churchmen, not to say Bishops, could have been found to give their countenance to such propositions."

We are weaker to-day than we were then. They are stronger to-day than they were then, and do we expect now to extort from their pity or their fears that which then their judgment or con-

viction would not grant? Alas for the infatuation of the hour, the vain hoping against hope!

Yet you cry, "Stay and fight it out within the Church!" We answer again, we not merely despair of the results of the petition, but we question the propriety of petition under the circumstances. We cannot now be satisfied with that which might have satisfied us ten or even five years ago. We know too much, we have studied too much, we see too clearly the sources of these difficulties.

If Evangelical men go to the General Convention asking what many of them want, and now feel that they must have—they go asking the Convention for that which, if it be true to itself, true to its convictions, they know it cannot possibly grant; and with what sort of consistency, planting themselves as they do upon loyalty to conscience and truth as they hold it, can they ask another body of men, eminent, conscientious and intelligent, to be false to itself and faithless to its principles, in order that they may be true to themselves and faithful to their principles? Have I any right to ask any man to violate his conscience and do what he is persuaded is wrong, merely for my sake? None whatsoever!

Yet you cry, "Stay and fight it out in the Church!" A great commander once complimented his soldiers by saying that they did not know when they were defeated; and yet methinks there may be both safety and virtue in acknowledging defeat ere it is irretrievable. When the little band of patriots has been all but annihilated, and the victorious battalions are in full possesson of the field, what is the course of wisdom? Shall this handful of men stay and be cut to pieces as they must be, if they remain where they are; or shall they retreat, rally their scattered or scattering columns, take up a new position, re-intrench themselves, and in a new field endeavor to retrieve the disasters of the past, and save the cause! Who doubts the wisdom of the latter course? The same principle holds good for us. For one I am firmly persuaded that more can be done for the cause we love, more can be done to promote the preaching of the Gospel in connection with a moderate Episcopacy, an orderly worship, and a pure and scriptural Liturgy by going out of, than by remaining in this Church.

What have I now done? *Is there not a cause? Yes, verily. I find a sixth cause, in the apathy and indifference of the laity to this whole subject, solemn aad important as it is.*

Yes, beloved hearers, this sad yet real necessity has been impcsed upon us (and let it be said in all tenderness and without a word of reproach) by your ignorance of, or insensibility to the dangers by which you are surrounded. Your pastor to-day may adopt as his own, in all reverence and humility, the language of the Lord to His disciples, and say, "It is expedient for you that I go away." It will doubtless be the means of leading some, I would fain hope many among you, to study, to think upon, to pray over this subject, as you never did before. It may be safely affirmed that most of you have thought more of this subject within the last eight days than in the eight years preceding. If you had been alive to the issues presented, there need have been no severance of the tie which has united us. If you had been alert to the exigencies of times and occasions, so far from allowing your pastor to go out alone, you would have entreated him to lead you forth. As ever so now is the principle true, that the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church! In general men lay no great stress upon a cause or a principle till they discover that other men, men whom they respect, men whom they love, men in whose integrity they have confidence, are ready to suffer somewhat and surrender somewhat in its defense. While the enthusiasm of its advocates evaporates in words, they are contented to think it insignificant, but when their conviction tells itself out in sacrifice, they begin to count it worthy of their thoughts. It is for your sakes, beloved, no less than for my own sake and the sake of the cause, that this step is to be taken. May it lead you to prayer, to reflection, to the earnest asking "Lord what wilt thou have me to do?"

So I leave you; and for what? That I may go forth to anarchy, to a wild and wicked lawlessness, to disorder, to a worship cold and bald and heartless and lifeless? Not at all! I expect to use the very forms I long have used and always loved. I expect to preach and to hear preached the same blessed Gospel—preached and heard preached before. Episcopacy is not rejected.

A Liturgy is not discarded. My petitions will be presented in the same terms, my faith expressed in the same Creed as now. There will be less difference between what I have been among you these eight years back, and what I shall be when the step is taken, than there is between what the Protestant Episcopal Church is now, and what she was fifty years ago.

And what shall I have gained? Gained! Why, a clear conscience, a sense of duty done, and freedom from my bonds. I shall have the excellence without the evil that is in this Church! The weight will be taken off. I shall no longer be saying what I have been led to believe is not true. I can perform the functions of the ministry without fearing that I am acting a lie. I can recognize the brethren of other churches as true ministers of Jesus Christ, without being considered factious and disorderly. I shall no longer be inducing others to enter relations which may prove harmful to their spiritual life.

And is not this enough? I ask it in all honesty, is not this enough to justify this course? I speak as to wise men—judge ye what I say!

I am not here to proselyte, I am here simply to explain and vindicate personal action. I ask no man, no woman, no child among you to follow me! I go out alone; acting simply upon conscientious conviction and duty apprehended in the sight of God. I desire to have you so act, not as influenced by prejudice, by impulse, by personal attachment, by the ephemeral excitement of an hour, but by a sense of your obligation to Christ to His cause, to the good of your own souls!